

they had left school with such a knowledge of the classics as to have been considered good scholars at the time, can it be seriously expected that at the expiration of six or seven years, devoted to other subjects, they shall be found competent to undergo such strict examinations in the classics as would be required, at either of our universities, after a residence there of four years, with a constant application to the dead languages? It must not be forgotten, also, that a member cannot become a fellow without an extended medical education, and thereby to distinguish himself, and the very key to his distinction becomes the bane and antidote of his classical learning, which is requisite for this critical examination; in other words, two jealous mistresses require his undivided attention, neither being satisfied by half-and-half attentions. He cannot devote his time to both. In addition to this, I consider the law relating to the fellowship a retrospective one to members of the present time, and one which is arbitrary and unjust.

I will next inquire what such an examination has to do with the usual and strict examinations of the professors of the College, or of what avail such an examination can be to the profound anatomist, the skilful surgeon, or the general practitioner? or does it make either one tittle the better man? The patient does not require his medical man to be a classical critic or a lecturer on the languages. I should have thought, if it were so, it would be wiser to make such acquirements precede the medical education, and that a degree of A.B. at one of the universities be a *sine qua non* to admission to the hospital or lecture-room. But after all, is a high classical education necessary to constitute the skilful and successful?—which, Sir, I submit to the profession, ought to be the sole claim to the honour of a fellowship. Why, then, force the practitioner who now has the certificate of the College as a proof of his fitness to undergo this extraordinary examination, before you allow him to come into the College, which seems, as it were, the “ultimum bonum,” because, as far as the public are concerned, if he is fit to be sent before the public as a member, he is as a fellow. It is the treatment of the schoolboy, if you say your lesson well, you shall have a seat on this stool—“ut olim pueri crusticula dant Blandi Doctores.” A great cause is generally undertaken as a public good, and if the rank of fellow either confers a boon on the public or a benefit to society, it can only be so as a token of high approbation of the College; if so, why not reserve it for such men who have received the testimony of honour from the public, or have done some good for humanity, or effected a blessing to the state, or in some way distinguished themselves; then, and not until then, will the degree of fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons be esteemed by the public as a credit to the holder, as a mark of distinction in that particular branch of skill and learning over which the College is constituted to preside and to judge. Let the College require the highest qualifications in that branch over which they preside, and not intermeddle with other acquirements foreign to their establishment, lest the public should be at a loss to know whether Mr. A. B. is made fellow for his skill in surgery or his attainments as a classical scholar. Having, Sir, endeavoured to expose the futility of the present system, allow me to make a few suggestions, which, though coming from a humble individual, are yet based on such grounds as will afford the best proofs of qualification—viz., let the College require of the medical student about to enter the profession evidence of a sound classical education, either by his having graduated in arts at one of the universities, or by his submitting to a fair examination, at which time, if not found proficient, they may with propriety say, “Boy, go back to school;” or, having gone through this examination, then, and not till then, let him enter to his medical education, and in due course admit him to the membership, after which, should he either distinguish himself in his calling or otherwise, give him the highest rank, as a mark of their esteem and respect, and make him a fellow.

I am, Sir, &c.,

A SURGEON.

February 14, 1850.

## THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS AND THE PROJECTED COLLEGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The present moment is a critical one for the medical profession; I feel anxious, therefore, through the pages of your journal, to address a few words of advice to my fellow-members of the College of Surgeons.

To what, I would ask, are we to attribute all the disunion, the conflicting interests, and petty jealousies, that have so long prevailed throughout the medical profession, weakening its collective influence, lowering it in public estimation, and

retarding the advancement of medical and surgical science by withholding from the meritorious those distinctions of rank or place which, when properly bestowed, are powerful incentives to exertion. The causes of all these evils are clearly two—first, the multiplicity of medical and surgical institutions; and secondly, their gross mismanagement. Our object, therefore, should be to reduce, not to increase, the number of medical corporations, and to correct those abuses which are the offspring of prejudice and monopoly.

I am not surprised that the members of the College of Surgeons should feel indignant at the insulting behaviour of the council; it is, indeed, hard to endure patiently the overbearing conduct of self-elected governors, especially when their unworthiness and incapacity are so deeply felt, and so universally acknowledged. I am not surprised, too, that such men as the council of the college, who, with a few honourable exceptions, are so proverbially narrow-minded and selfish—men who, preferring place to character, dishonour their office by retaining it, should feel regardless of the general good of the profession. This is the infirmity of human nature; it is a sad spectacle in men whose professional attainments would otherwise command our respect, and if it provokes our anger, should also claim our pity. The members of the college, however, must not forget their duty, nor suffer themselves to be betrayed by a momentary feeling of irritation and resentment into any act of indiscretion. The College of Surgeons, though a badly conducted, is yet a time-honoured institution, and we must neither destroy it ourselves by constructing a rival college, nor suffer it to sink lower than it has lately done through the imbecility of its present managers. All our remonstrances with these misguided men have hitherto been ineffectual, and nothing now can avert the ruin of the college but the enfranchisement of its members, and a complete remodelling of its present laws; it is to the attainment of these objects, therefore, that all our united efforts should be steadily directed. Let us make our grievances known to the Secretary of State and the present Parliament, and we have every reason to hope that they will be listened to and redressed.

The fellowship, if it is to be conferred on persons who are unworthy of a seat at the council-table, is a bauble not worth our acceptance.

Allow me, Sir, in conclusion, to express my gratitude for your zealous co-operation in the cause we have at heart—viz., the preservation of the college by a well-timed and judicious reform, which, I trust, may yet be effected.

I remain, Sir,

Your much obliged and obedient servant,

Much-Wenlock, Feb. 26, 1850.

W. P. BROOKES.

## QUESTION—SHALL THERE BE CORPORATE REFORM, OR MEDICAL REFORM?

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

AFTER offering some general remarks on these subjects, the writer observes, that—

Many medical reformers, without doubt, have left the reformation of corporate wrongs entirely to those members of the corporation whom it most concerned; conceiving that this species of reform would have but little effect on the general reformation of the profession. And such reformers as these must be glad to find that at the present moment the great reformation is not in imminent danger of being stifled by soothing the ruffled *amour propre* of those gentlemen who were discontented with their corporate laws; and that the redress of errors committed in the year of grace 1843, will not be so complete as to prevent the chance of older errors sharing a better fate, or so “satisfactory to all parties” as to shelve the entire question of medical reform.

I venture to say, then, even at the risk of being considered a promoter of discord, that there are reformers who will not be sorry that the ultimatum of the Council of the College of Surgeons has altered the late tranquil features of the medical reform question, and given another opportunity for all thorough reformers to unite in proclaiming, that whatever the alteration in charters may be, no alteration shall be made in the laws of this country, without the explicit acknowledgment of those great principles of justice which, discarding the interests of the few for that of the many, constitute the foundations of all law, and without which no law can stand.

Although I did not wish to disturb the late negotiations while they were pending, I could not agree with “the Oldest and Staunchest of Medical Reformers,” that “a fair prospect of bringing to a final close the long-agitated question of medical reform is now before us, and that by our united efforts,